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IRAQI-BORN DUTCH CITIZEN PLEADS GUILTY TO TERRORISM CONSPIRACY AGAINST AMERICANS IN IRAQ

Defendant Also Agrees to Plead Guilty to Beating D.C. Prison Guard Unconscious

WASHINGTON – An Iraqi-born Dutch citizen today pleaded guilty to conspiring with others to murder Americans overseas, including by planting roadside bombs targeting U.S. soldiers in Fallujah, Iraq, and by demonstrating on video how these explosives would be detonated to destroy American vehicles and their occupants.

The guilty plea by Wesam al-Delaema, a/k/a Wesam Khalaf Chayed Delaeme, age 36, was announced today by Matthew G. Olsen, Acting Assistant Attorney General for National Security; Jeffrey A. Taylor, U.S. Attorney for the District of Columbia; and Joseph Persichini Jr., Assistant Director in Charge of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Washington Field Office.

At a hearing today before U.S. District Court Judge Paul Friedman, al-Delaema entered a plea of guilty to count one of a six-count indictment returned in U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia in September 2005. Specifically, al-Delaema pleaded guilty to conspiracy to murder U.S. nationals outside the United States.

Separately, al-Delaema has also agreed to plead guilty next week in Superior Court for the District of Columbia to one count of aggravated assault for a December 2007 incident at the D.C. jail in which he kicked a prison guard to the point of unconsciousness while the guard was prone on the ground. The guard sustained significant injuries, including a subdural hemorrhage. Al-Delaema was indicted for this offense in Superior Court for the District of Columbia in November 2008.

The Justice Department and al-Delaema have agreed upon a sentence of 25 years imprisonment for the offense of conspiracy to murder U.S. nationals overseas and a concurrent sentence of 18 months imprisonment for the offense of aggravated assault. Sentencing has been set for April 15, 2009. According to an agreement between the United States and the Netherlands, al-Delaema will serve out his sentence in the Netherlands.

According to the plea agreement and factual proffers filed in court, between October 2003 and May 2, 2005, al-Delaema entered into an agreement with several co-conspirators to murder U.S. nationals in Iraq. As part of the conspiracy, al-Delaema travelled to Fallujah in October 2003. There, al-Delaema and his co-conspirators -- calling themselves the "Mujahideen from Fallujah" -- declared their intentions to kill Americans in Iraq using improvised explosive devices (IEDs).

As part of the conspiracy, al-Delaema and his co-conspirators discussed and demonstrated, on video, the way in which the IEDs they had buried in a road near Fallujah would be detonated and would destroy American vehicles driving on the road and kill the American occupants of those vehicles.

In one statement on video, al-Delaema stated, "We will show you, in a short while, the site where we hide the mines and how the operation is conducted. The operation will be carried out, if Allah wills, today, and if they come. This is not the first operation we carry out. We have executed several operations and most of them were successful. The American Army wouldn't admit to casualties. Their casualties have gone beyond our imagination. In Fallujah alone, they lost hundreds."

Later in the same video, al-Delaema and a co-conspirator demonstrated the components of an IED buried in the road.

According to the factual proffer that he agreed to, al-Delaema not only created "how-to" and recruitment videos, but also filmed the effects of roadside attacks in Iraq. Furthermore, after his return to the Netherlands, al-Delaema continued to attempt to obtain propaganda videos for those seeking to kill Americans in Iraq, frequently attempting to obtain raw footage of attacks on Americans in Iraq.

Finally, in May 2005, al-Delaema possessed video images of himself and his co-conspirators documenting their intentions to kill Americans in Iraq and their acts in furtherance of their conspiracy, including hiding the roadside bombs near Fallujah. He also possessed that day additional edited videos of attacks on Americans.

Al-Delaema was arrested by Dutch law enforcement authorities on May 2, 2005, and he initially faced similar charges in that country. Following his arrest, Dutch law enforcement and prosecution authorities worked cooperatively with the FBI in its investigation of al-Delaema's terrorist activities.

In September 2005, the United States filed a formal request with the Netherlands seeking al-Delaema's extradition. The extradition request was subsequently granted by a Dutch court and then by the Dutch Ministry of Justice. In December 2006, the extradition request was sustained on appeal in the Netherlands. In January 2007, al-Delaema was flown to the United States, arrested and taken into custody by the FBI.

"Today's guilty plea is the culmination of the first prosecution in the United States charging terrorist activities in Iraq. Al-Delaema now faces justice for his efforts to

orchestrate roadside bomb attacks against our men and women serving in Iraq. We are honored to play a role in prosecuting those involved in such attacks,” said Matthew G. Olsen, Acting Assistant Attorney General for National Security.

“Today's plea demonstrates our continued vigilant efforts to track down and bring to justice terrorists who plot attacks on our citizens, particularly our brave military men and women serving in Iraq,” stated U.S. Attorney Jeffrey A. Taylor. “We hope this sends a message to others plotting to harm our citizens that we will use every tool at our disposal to defend Americans, both at home and abroad.”

“Investigations of terrorists traveling to and from Iraq and Afghanistan to conduct anti-coalition attacks can only be accomplished through the close cooperation between the FBI and our foreign law enforcement partners,” said FBI Assistant Director in Charge Joseph Persichini Jr. “The FBI had the extreme good fortune to work with the Dutch KLPD in this terrorism investigation and we look forward to continued cooperation with The Netherlands and other members of the International Law Enforcement community in fighting the global war on terror.”

The investigation into this matter was conducted by the FBI's Washington Field Office, with assistance from the Dutch National Police Agency and the National Office of the Public Prosecutor in the Netherlands. The Office of International Affairs in the Criminal Division of the U.S. Department of Justice coordinated the extradition efforts on behalf of the United States.

The prosecutors handling the case are Assistant U.S. Attorneys Gregg Maisel and Rachel Lieber of the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Columbia, and Trial Attorney David Miller of the Counterterrorism Section of the Justice Department's National Security Division.

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